

River Study Committee

April 30, 2015

1. Convene the meeting

Chairman Lionel Ingram called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town office building. Members present were: Frank Ferraro, Rod Bourden, Frank Patterson, Roger Wakeman, Pete Richardson, Virginia Raub and Richard Huber. Also in attendance; Paul Vlasich Town Engineer, Jake St. Antonio of VHB, Eric Hutchins of NOAA, Selectman Don Clement, and David Burdick of UNH

Guest: Paul Kirshen of UNH and director of CAPE program

2. Approval of minutes of March 19, 2015 meeting

Mr. Huber asked the reference he made to the American Rivers document be clarified, noting the document discusses case studies of dam removals that may be similar to the removal of the Great Dam but does not specifically reference the Dam. The document entitled: Dam Removal and Historic Preservation, Reconciling Dual Objectives was distributed to the Great Dam Remembrance Committee for consideration. The link to the document for members to view is <http://www.americanrivers.org/newsroom/resources/dam-removal-and-historic-preservation-reconciling-dual-objective/>.

Mr. Richardson moved to accept the minutes with the changes to Mr. Huber's statement on the American Rivers website document; seconded by Mr. Ferraro. Motion carried.

3. Report of the status of dam removal

Mr. Vlasich reviewed the grants received, pending and potential. He spoke of a pending fish habitat grant for \$50,000 from DES. He was advised of an upcoming grant from NOAA the Town may be eligible; details/specifications are soon to be released.

Accepting the recommendation of the Dam Remembrance Committee to keep some parts of the dam, (the headworks of the penstock) there was the need for some plan revision as that was not anticipated. VHB did additional (hydrological) modeling and determined there will be no restriction on water flow with this portion of the dam works remaining in place.

Referencing the Section 106 process, he stated the Army Corps of Engineers did issue a letter of determination effect and it stated an adverse effect is created on the waterfront commercial historic district (with the removal of Dam)

The Dam Remembrance Committee submitted their recommendations to the BOS and the Board concurred with their recommended mitigation measures. A letter outlining the proposed mitigation items was then sent to NH Division of Historical Resources (DHR) and a copy to the Army Corps of Engineers. (Copy of letter distributed to members of Committee)

The wetlands permit application was sent to DES and the hearings on the application are set for the Exeter Squamscott Local Advisory Committee on May 26 and the Exeter Conservation Commission meeting on May 12, 2015.

He also stated they anticipate meeting with the property owner whenever any river construction work is taking place within 20' of their property line to advise what is going on. This would also include the Academy when work is being done on the intake pipe.

The negotiations with the Mill complex on their water usage from the river are nearing a conclusion and will have a draft agreement for their review shortly.

Responding to a question of being on schedule, Mr. Vlasich answered in the affirmative but noted the delay in starting any construction work in September depends on the permitting process and what the regulatory agencies will say; are entering that stage now.

Mr. St. Antonio of VHB, continuing with the update, confirmed the plan revision retaining a portion of the headworks of the dam as a mitigation measure; will not have an impact on the water surface elevation under flood conditions. Another change to plan is to lower the Town gravity intake pipe into the well house; for safety and in anticipation of possible future use.

All the permits have been submitted; can expect 75-90 days for a response from DES on the Wetland permit. In meantime will be setting up meetings with NOAA and Fish and Game to go over plan and addressing any possible responses from the regulatory agencies.

4. Review of CAPE analysis and findings

Dr. Paul Kirshen, director of the Climate Adaptation Program for Exeter project, (CAPE), stated he is trying to determine how to enter into a dialogue with the Town and its representatives to interpret the data from the project. He is prepared to show the type of results but he is not prepared to discuss in detail; wants to fine tune the findings with the Town representatives over the next two months with what they want/need and then draft a report following their responses.

The study committee spent the last eight months ensuring the models are strong and viable for validity. The analysis will focus on how vulnerable Exeter will be to water related climate change. Over the summer the report will be written and a public meeting planned for the fall. Stressing, the outcome of the report will not be a detailed adaption strategy for Exeter but more of an assessment on what climate change will be on water scenarios if no action is taken.

There will be a section about adaptations strategies and what they may mean; will need a strong public process to determine what to do. A dialogue on this topic will need to be started to determine what action needs to occur over the next few years.

Reviewing, he restated the four issues of concern: river flooding, drainage, water quality and the downstream ecosystem. His Power Point presentation illustrated the vulnerability assessment process for the study.

Mr. Ingram verified the CAPE study committee's link with the Town is through the Planning Department. But Mr. Kirshen added there is other interaction with a Citizens Working group, DPW and this River Committee.

Members' questions focused on the modeling and their output. Mr. Kirshen noted modeling can predict trends but not certainties i.e. levels of greenhouse gases, atmospheric systems, temperature change.

The project used three models; flood model of entire watershed, models of watershed to look at water quality and low flow issues in the Exeter portion of watershed and stormwater management. They are complex models and/with their interrelationships.

The Power Point continued depicting various scenarios addressing the uncertainties; also had to factor in what was going on in Squamscott River and the interrelationship of the two.. Examples of the different measurements were displayed for three time periods, 2010, 2040 and 2070. Again, Mr. Kirshen stressed the material displayed were just sample scenarios

Mr. Huber spoke of his use of the NH GRANIT website, NH Coastal Viewer, and would this information be available on the site. The answer was no, as they (CAPE project) do not have the resources to do so but would/could provide GRANIT the information; just not able to do the necessary mechanics to construct the overlays.

The question was posed how the public can view this information. It was suggested this material be available on Town website with the caveat that it is a sample and not the final product. The Chair re-stated CAPE is looking for authoritative, in-depth feedback from Town departments and suggested giving to BOS and let them determine how to organize the effort. By doing so could get a coordinated response; both public and private responses. As for the role of this committee is to play, the Chair felt the BOS should set the agenda.

Mr. Ferraro suggested this not be put on website; too premature.

Mr. Vlasich felt the department heads have received enough of the information to start to have conversations among the departments; ready to start constructive comments whenever the time is designated. He suggested that is first activity before posting.

Mr. Clement, as a member of the River Committee, did not feel he received enough information from the slide presentation to answer any questions; suggested this material be sent to members to better review. Mr. Ingram re-stated this is not a briefing but to give members a sampling of contents of study; agreed this information might be useful, but is it critical. He is hearing the department heads are beginning to have conversations but going forward how can this be broadened; is a task for BOS.

From the audience, Mr. Hutchins responding to the preceding dialogue feels it is a two-step process. Do not address impacts initially but present the model results of the flood elevations first; no consequences of such flooding events. Let people critique with given various illustrations/maps i.e. FEMA maps; need to buy in the models before you start talking of the impacts.

The Chair echoed the two step process as responsible. Discussion continued among members as ways to move forward. Mr. Ingram referenced the recent Section 106 Dam Remembrance Committee that brought together interested/concerned parties and then after hearing ideas/testimonies presented their findings to the BOS for consideration of action. Perhaps the Town departments and staff could follow such a format; suggested to continue to work with Town on how this process should be organized.

Noting this first presentation (to public) is critical; Mr. Ingram echoed Mr. Hutchins suggestion to show (visual) water impacts. The presentation needs to be managed in a way that helps CAPE and the Town.

From the discussion, Mr. Ferraro motioned the committee recommend (to BOS) the initial presentation is on the modeling and the impacts from a hydrologic standpoint. Mr. Bourdon seconded. Motion carried.

In defending the models at this initial meeting, Mr. Hutchins spoke of the need to find photos of the 2005-2006 floods as visual examples of rainfall amounts in what was categorized as a 120 year event as validation of amounts of future predicted rainfall.

He also referenced the upcoming grant announcement of a substantial funding amount for projects relating to habitat resiliency. Not only is it pertinent to the Dam Removal project, but suggested in preparing the grant application list the efforts the Town is undertaking to address climate change and habitat (town wise) resiliency; could be a bonus in rating for acceptance.

Mr. Clement also saw it as a two-step process. Initially get the model out there for all to see/view, but the second phase be internal. Let the department heads/staff, using the models, develop potential impacts and any associated costs.

Mr. Huber, compared this project to that of the initial study of dam removal. It was a long term project but efforts were made to keep the public informed as different phases were undertaken. He envisions the BOS establishing a working group that would stay together over time and provide updates as the science changes; sees this group as the department heads and staff that have knowledge of the workings of their responsibilities.

Comments from the committee members and from the audience stressed to Mr. Kirshen the need to get the image out there as in a Town Hall public meeting; what this all means to the residents before the more complex data is presented. The format of the dam information meetings was suggested where the audience broke out into smaller groups for questions/comments on their particular concerns of the project.

Responding to a statement from Mr. Wakeman, the Chair agreed the River Committee does not have ownership of this project and that the BOS should decide how to go forward. But not even that until Mr. Kirshen has had an opportunity to think through what he wants before taking next step.

Mr. Huber, in summing up the discussion, felt the objective of a public meeting is to gather all the stakeholders and benefit from their local knowledge and expertise.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Kirshen for coming and if members had further questions to email Mr. Kirshen directly; Paul.Kirshen@unh.edu. The Chair thanked the committee for all the suggestions and was certain they would hear more of the project. Mr. Hutchins was also thanked for his comments.

5. The Section 106 process

Mr. Huber, the Committee's representative to the Dam Remembrance Committee provided an update. He reviewed the formation, membership and activities of this working group. Public meetings were held with information gathered on how the Great Dam should be memorialized. The committee prepared a report on their findings and presented it to the BOS. Their recommendations were accepted by the BOS and forwarded in correspondence to the NH Division of Historical Resources listing the six recommended mitigation measures; the Army Corps of Engineers, Peter Walker and Rita Walsh of VHB and the Advisory Council of Historical Preservation were also copied.

Reviewing the recommended measures, he did acknowledge some of the information/suggestions were out of the scope of the \$30,000 budget for mitigation but didn't want to discount them as they represented measures important to the residents and possibly be added to the new site if additional funding is provided. They were tasked to what the Town was losing; what did the dam represent. Mr. Huber listed some physical features residents cited they felt would be lost, but felt the major loss of this 1940's dam was to the historic district of the Town as it symbolically represented the industrial era of the town. By retaining the headworks it acknowledges this period. .

Mr. Ingram felt this committee fulfilled its stated purpose; task is now how to insure these measures are carried out. Because they are to be a part of the Memorandum of Agreement, there is some assurance they will happen but there needs to be follow up. With Mr. Jordan, chairman of the group unable to attend this meeting Mr. Ingram had hoped for a discussion if this committee would stay on to be the follow up group or not; ultimately decision of BOS.

When questioned, Mr. Huber stated it is his understanding there would not be additional costs to the taxpayers for the proposed mitigation measures; felt all fit within the budgeted amount. As to completion of said measure, they are part of the federal permitting process so need to be done. However Mr. Hutchins commented from his experience with similar projects completion can be from 1 month to 3 years; is some flexibility. Mr. Ingram again, posed the question on who is responsible for the follow up; River Committee may participate but up to BOS.

6. Other business:

Mr. Vlasich reported he was contacted by the Abenaki Nation (of NH?) to do a celebration of the river returning back to its original state. The event is to be June 20 down by the dam site; no further information at this time.

He also commented DPW's request in the last CIP program for conducting a breach analysis for the Pickpocket Dam was not funded but Town does have a letter of deficiency from 2011 to perform. It will be submitted again this year in CIP and was looking for support from Committee for funding.

Mr. Vlasich commented the draft final project plan, the Water Integration for Squamscott-Exeter

(WISE) is complete. The plan will support the management of point and non-point wastewater sources (nitrogen runoff) in the communities of Exeter, Stratham and Newfields and suggested they be invited to a future meeting to review their report.

7. Next Meeting

With the permitting process underway there might not be any dam project updates for a while, the consensus was to not meet until July 16, 2015. The Chair added Mr. Kirshen will be contacted for an update from CAPE and WISE will be contacted for availability to address the group.

Mr. Hutchins commented with no meeting until July, there may be some consideration of putting together a timeline for activity in anticipation of questions. Mr. Vlasich when questioned further for a drop dead date for action answered with bids to go out in July, demolition equipment could be in river in September; but not start in December. Again, permitting responses are crucial if construction is to begin in 2015 or postponed until 2016.

If all the permitting is complete and in the affirmative before the July meeting, Mr. Vlasich agreed to send an email to committee members advising of such.

With no further business, meeting was adjourned at 11:15 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub

Recording Secretary